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FM AMEMBASSY ATHENS

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1434

INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 0643

RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL PRIORITY 0403

RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 0150

RUEHVT/AMEMBASSY VALLETTA PRIORITY 0211

RUEKJCS/Joint STAFF WASHDC PRIORITY

RHMFISS/EUCOM POLAD VAIHINGEN GE PRIORITY

RHMFISS/SACEUR POLAD SHAPE BE PRIORITY

RHMFISS/COMNAVREG EUR NAPLES IT PRIORITY

RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

RHMFISS/NAVSUPPACT SOUDA BAY GR PRIORITY

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ATHENS 000371

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/10/2018

TAGS: NATO PREL MOPS MARR AF GR MK

SUBJECT: GREECE/AFGHANISTAN: DEFENSE MINISTER MANAGES EXPECTATIONS ON FURTHER ISAF CONTRIBUTIONS

REF: A. STATE 19516

1B. ATHENS 313 (NOTAL)

Classified By: Ambassador Daniel V. Speckhard for 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) Ambassador Speckhard met with Defense Minister Meimarakis March 7 to press for increased Greek contributions to ISAF. Meimarakis said Greece recognizes the importance of the mission and wants to do more but that more time is needed to prepare the public. Greece cannot provide helicopters now, but may after procuring additional helicopters next year. Meimarakis did not rule out a Greek-led PRT in Dai Kundi, but said any Greek response would be "within the boundary of our limits." He also said that it would be "difficult" to lift the caveat restricting deployment to the Kabul region; Ambassador Speckhard encouraged him to focus on how to sell these missions to the public and then approach lifting the caveats for specific missions. He also pressed for Greece to lead an OMLT in Jalalabad. On Macedonia, the Ambassador urged that Greece remain focused on finding a solution. Meimarakis agreed the "time is now" but said there are no indications Skopje is serious in negotiating. End Summary.

Push for More Greek ISAF Contributions

12. (C) Ambassador Speckhard met March 7 with Defense Minister Meimarakis to deliver ref A request for further Greek contributions to ISAF. Meimarakis was accompanied by CHOD Grapsas and diplomatic advisor Stoidis. Ambassador was accompanied by DATT, ODC Chief, and A/Political Counselor. The Ambassador expressed appreciation for Greek contributions to OEF and OIF, including through support for the U.S. Naval Support Facility at Souda Bay, deployments in ISAF, and Greek contributions in KFOR, which are playing an important role in maintaining stability. Noting the importance of Afghanistan for the Alliance and the need for further contributions prior to the April NATO Summit, the Ambassador pressed Meimarakis to consider further contributions to ISAF, including:

-- A Greek-led PRT in Dai Kundi: The Ambassador said that establishment of a PRT in Dai Kundi is a high priority. As the PRT leader Greece would play an important role in reconstruction and development.

-- Provision of helicopters to ISAF.

-- OMLTs: Although Greece has offered one OMLT to ISAF, due to Greece's geographic restrictions, NATO has responded by requesting three officers to join a U.S. embedded training team in Kabul. The Ambassador asked that Greece consider leading an OMLT in Jalalabad -- which would be based in a garrison -- noting that NATO considers Jalalabad to be part of the RC-Capital region, and that this could therefore be seen as within the Greek caveat.

-- A lifting of the caveat limiting deployment to Kabul.

¶13. (C) Meimarakis responded that Greece "wants" a success for NATO in Afghanistan, adding "we must succeed at all costs." Meimarakis said that there are "difficulties," and Greece is unable to "provide as much as we would like." Primary among the difficulties is public opinion; the public is "not keen to understand" why Greece needs to be in Afghanistan. The Government needs to prepare more of the groundwork for public acceptance of Greek deployments to Afghanistan, and this will take some time. He responded to the specific requests as follows:

-- Dai Kundi PRT: He said he would discuss this request "with the Foreign Ministry," adding "hopefully we will be able to do something within the boundary of our limits."

-- Helicopters: Meimarakis reiterated what we were told by FM Bakoyannis (ref B): at this time, Greece does not have any helicopters to spare, but may next year after procuring additional helicopters. Meimarakis added that the government is leaving speculation about provision of helicopters to ISAF

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in the press so that the public will be more accepting of the idea when Greece is in a better position to make a contribution.

-- OMLTs: Meimarakis said Greece's OMLT offer is "under coordination" with SHAPE. For now, NATO only wants three officers in the embedded training unit in Kabul. The Ambassador noted that this is because Greece is unwilling to deploy outside the Kabul region, and reiterated that Greece could lead an OMLT in Jalalabad -- which would be inside a garrison. Meimarakis did not respond directly to this point, but noted that the Government had approved an OMLT of up to 13 personnel, and the additional personnel are available to the Alliance, if wanted.

-- Caveat: Meimarakis said that the caveat is a "binding framework under which we operate" in Afghanistan. This decision was taken by the former PASOK government in the context of Greek support to the UN in Afghanistan. He said the government would face Parliamentary opposition to a change in the caveat. He said "for now, we can't overcome the caveat." The Ambassador encouraged him to look at the problem from a different angle -- look first at how the missions Greece is being asked to do can be sold to the public (for example, leading an OMLT in Jalalabad is helping Afghans to develop their own security so NATO can eventually leave, and the OMLT is in garrison so Greek forces will be protected; running a PRT is a humanitarian/development effort that helps meet the basic needs of the Afghan people). The Government should approach lifting the caveats around these specific missions, as it is selling the missions to the public. This would avoid the political fight on lifting the caveat on general principles.

¶14. (C) Meimarakis said Greece is also helping in Afghanistan in additional ways:

-- Leopard Tanks: Greece has donated 13 Leopard Tanks to the Afghan National Army and will train Afghan officers in their use, in coordination with ISAF.

-- Kabul Airport: Greece offered to take over operations of the Kabul Airport and is now in consultations with NATO authorities to do so in 2010.

-- Field Hospital: Greece remains ready to redeploy a "role 2 mobile hospital" to Kabul if desired. A Greek hospital was withdrawn from Kabul in 2007.

Macedonia Name

¶5. (C) Meimarakis said Greece was "disappointed" with the results of the last round of talks with UN Envoy Nimetz. Skopje, he said, had made clear it was not serious in negotiating. Meimarakis reiterated that "now is the time" to resolve this issue, and the government has taken "sustained political cost" by accepting a composite name. It is now time for Skopje to "be flexible" and accept a compound name. Meimarakis added that Bulgaria is also unhappy with the name situation.

¶6. (C) Ambassador Speckhard urged that Greece remain focused on finding a solution, and in showing maximum flexibility in the negotiations. He also urged direct contacts between Athens and Skopje under the Nimetz framework to make progress.

SPECKHARD